

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

5 A screening assay for identifying modulators of chondrogenesis is
described. The assay comprises providing cells capable of differentiating into
chondroblasts; transfecting the cells with a nucleic acid construct comprising a
reporter gene that is detectable upon chondroblast differentiation; adding a
test compound to the transfected cells; and determining the effect of the test
compound on chondroblast differentiation. The reporter gene is preferably
10 responsive to the transcription factor Sox9. The modulators may be useful as
therapeutic agents that can inhibit or enhance cartilage formation. The assay
may also be used to diagnose, monitor or prognose diseases associated with
abnormal cartilage formation.

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